

Newsweek
May 29, 1967
 DIPLOMACY:

Model Defector

He was a model Iron Curtain diplomat with an impeccable past. He had joined the Hungarian Communist Party as a teen-ager in 1940 during the party's illegal underground days. He was one of the first party members to enter Hungary's foreign service when the party surfaced after World War II. And during the Hungarian revolt in 1956, he rode stonily into Budapest aboard one of the Soviet tanks that crushed the uprising. Inevitably, therefore, a comradely welcome was awaiting Janos Radvanyi when he arrived in Washington in 1962 as head of Hungary's legation. He was promptly inducted into the capital's tight little island of Soviet-bloc diplomats, becoming a particularly close friend of Aleksandr Zinichuk, then the second-ranking diplomat in the Russian Embassy.

At the same time, however, Radvanyi proved to be an undogmatic proponent

of peaceful coexistence, so much so that he earned a major share of the credit for improving Hungary's post-uprising relations with the U.S. They so improved that Radvanyi's legation was upgraded last November to an embassy, and Radvanyi himself expected to be named ambassador as soon as the U.S. got around to appointing one in Budapest.

As the years passed in Washington, the congenial 6-footer also increasingly practiced coexistence as well as preaching it. Through discreet entertainment at his two-story, Colonial-style home (once occupied by Jack Valenti), he developed a wide circle of American friends—and a fondness for some of the more unproletarian amenities of American life. An American newsman who asked him to lunch was somewhat stunned when Radvanyi blithely ordered a \$12 steak. "When I am in a capitalist country," he explained, "I want to live like a capitalist."

The allure of capitalist living turned out to be more than a matter of gastronomy. Only four weeks after Svetlana Stalin defected to the West, Janos Radvanyi followed her lead. The 45-year-old Hungarian, reported the State Department last week, "has decided he wishes to become a permanent resident of the United States." And in a later statement, Radvanyi declared, "It was impossible for me to act in good conscience and continue to be the representative of the Hungarian Government." The model Communist diplomat thus became the highest-ranking Communist official ever to seek asylum in the U.S.

Radvanyi, his wife, Julianna, and his 15-year-old son, Janos, were bundled out of Washington to an undisclosed hide-out. There, according to one high State Department official, he has already revealed that his government's Vietnam peace efforts never had solid backing from Hanoi. "You cannot think of a more inside man than Radvanyi, delighted another U.S. official at the prospect of further insights into Communist diplomacy. Meanwhile, as befits a model defector, the rumor circulated that Radvanyi had already sold his story for \$100,000 for four-part magazine serialization.